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YAHWEH IS HIS NAME

by Bob Hunter

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Yahweh groups originated in the 1930s as part of what is known as the Sacred Name movement. This movement began among some members of the Seventh-Day Church of God who were convinced that knowing God's name was vital. By the mid-1930s "several members and ministers of the Church of God Seventh-Day, such as Elder J. D. Bagwell, began to use the 'sacred name' and to promote the cause actively."¹

Out of this movement, numerous Yahweh groups have sprung up over the years. Probably the largest is the Assemblies of Yahweh, based in Bethel, Pennsylvania. Jacob O. Meyer, a former member of the Church of the Brethren, started attending a small Sacred Name church in Hamburg, Pennsylvania. This led him to start a radio ministry in Bethel in 1966 called *The Sacred Name Broadcast*.² This was followed by *The Sacred Name Broadcaster* magazine in 1968 and in 1969 he founded the Assemblies of Yahweh. It is reported that today affiliated assemblies are located in more than a hundred countries around the world with a total membership of several thousand.³

Other groups that are part of the Yahweh movement include Yahweh's Restoration Ministry, based in Jefferson City, Missouri; the Assembly of Yahweh 7th Day, based in Rising Star, Texas; and Yahweh's Assembly in Yahshua in Kingdom City, Missouri.

Undoubtedly the most notorious of the Yahweh groups these days is The House of Yahweh in Abilene, Texas, led by Yisrayl (Bill) Hawkins. This organization began with the founding of The House of Yahweh in Odessa, Texas, by Yisrayl's late brother Jacob, assisted by Yisrayl. In 1980 Yisrayl began holding services outside of Abilene "after he became convinced of the necessity of establishing the House of Yahweh according to the prophecies of Micah 4:1-2 and Isaiah 2:2."⁴

Yisrayl, who claims that he and his brother are the two witnesses described in the book of Revelation,⁵ is best known by his predictions of nuclear war. He first predicted war for September 12, 2006, stating on *The Prophetic Word* TV program, "Write down this date. September 12, nuclear war. Prophecy shows that nuclear war will start September 12, 2006."⁶

He later revised that date to say that nuclear war was only conceived on that date, and that the baby was "going to develop in nine months, the nuclear baby that started September 12th, 2006, and will end June 12th, 2007. Just a few months are left."⁷

When that failed to materialize, he then predicted nuclear war for June 12, 2008. “‘It could be turned loose before then,’ Hawkins told 20/20....‘You’re going to see this very soon, really soon,’ he said.”⁸

Doctrinal Distinctions. Yahweh groups have several doctrinal distinctions that separate them from biblical Christianity.

The first is the name of the Father and of Jesus. As the Assemblies of Yahweh report in their Statement of Doctrine, “We affirm that it is necessary and most important to our salvation that we accept the revealed, personal Name of our Heavenly Father YAHWEH and the Name of His Son, our Savior YAHSHUA the MESSIAH.”⁹

They deny the doctrine of the Trinity, holding that the Holy Spirit is a “mighty power from the Heavenly Father and the Messiah dwelling within us so that we may have the ability and strength to bring our lives into a state of perfection pleasing to our Heavenly Father, John 14:15–27. We find the trinitarian doctrine to be foreign to the inspired Scriptures.”¹⁰

They also teach that “the Bible commands the observance of all Yahweh’s laws, statutes, and judgments in both Old and New testaments (except the sacrifices mentioned in Hebrews 9 and ritual circumcision).”¹¹ This includes the annual feast days and observance of Saturday as the Sabbath.

Additionally, Yahweh groups believe that the soul does not survive death, deny eternal conscious punishment of the unsaved in hell, and teach that women are to keep their heads covered while in church and to remain silent.

Yahweh groups have no justification whatsoever for insisting salvation hinges on using the names Yahweh and Yashua. To begin with, vowels were not used in Hebrew, thus making it impossible to know for sure the exact pronunciation of YHWH.

Finally, to get hung up on the “proper” name is to get caught up in legalism. Christians are saved by grace through faith, not by knowing the proper pronunciation of God’s name.

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NOTES

- 1 James R. Lewis, *The Encyclopedia of Cults, Sects, and New Religions*, (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998), 414.
- 2 J. Gordon Melton, *Melton’s Encyclopedia of American Religions*, 8th ed. (New York: Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009), 595.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid., 598.
- 5 The House of Yahweh video: http://www.yahweh.com/Two_Witnesses/Two-Wits-Video-INFO.html.
- 6 YouTube video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UK36gJH0PHI>.
- 7 YouTube video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jgcN8E8r-tY>.

- 8 ABC News at <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/story?id=5008225&page=1>, June 6, 2008.
- 9 Assemblies of Yahweh website: <http://www.assembliesofyahweh.com/SOD.htm>.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Yahweh's Restoration Ministry, Statement of Belief,
http://www.yrm.org/YRM_statement_of%20belief.htm.